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# MU SHI SHI

4

YUKI URUSHIBARA

MU  
SHI  
SHI

4

YUKI  
URUSHIBARA

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# MU SHI SHI 4

**Yuki Urushibara**

Translated and adapted by  
William Flanagan

Lettered by  
North Market Street Graphics



Ballantine Books • New York

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*Mushishi* volume 4 is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locations or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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# Honorifics Explained

Throughout the Del Rey Manga books, you will find Japanese honorifics left intact in the translations. For those not familiar with how the Japanese use honorifics and, more important, how they differ from American honorifics, we present this brief overview.

Politeness has always been a critical facet of Japanese culture. Ever since the feudal era, when Japan was a highly stratified society, use of honorifics—which can be defined as polite speech that indicates relationship or status—has played an essential role in the Japanese language. When addressing someone in Japanese, an honorific usually takes the form of a suffix attached to one's name (example: "Asuna-san"), is used as a title at the end of one's name, or appears in place of the name itself (example: "Nagi-sensei," or simply "Sensei").

Honorifics can be expressions of respect or endearment. In the context of manga and anime, honorifics give insight into the nature of the relationship between characters. Many English translations leave out these important honorifics and therefore distort the feel of the original Japanese. Because Japanese honorifics contain nuances that English honorifics lack, it is our policy at Del Rey not to translate them. Here, instead, is a guide to some of the honorifics you may encounter in Del Rey Manga.

- san:** This is the most common honorific and is equivalent to Mr., Miss, Ms., or Mrs. It is the all-purpose honorific and can be used in any situation where politeness is required.
- sensei:** This is one level higher than "san" and is used to confer great respect.
- dono:** This comes from the word "dono," which means "lord." It is an even higher level than "sama" and confers utmost respect.
- kun:** This suffix is used at the end of boys' names to express familiarity or endearment. It is also sometimes used by men among friends, or when addressing someone younger or of a lower station.

## A Message from the Author

Whenever I think up a story, I always remember the times I used to go to Shirokawa-go. After the sun sinks on the town deep in the mountains, there is a great loneliness. And because of that, there is a great brightness to the hearth fires; there is a warmth in the people's voices and a certain thickness to the night. The next morning there's a luminance to the sunlight and mist. It was so alive that my body, used to a life lived mostly at night, took quite a while to become accustomed to it. Feeling myself so strongly seduced by both the light and darkness is something that I never want to forget.

—Yuki Urushibara



虫

ムシ

師

Mushishi

4

Yuki Urushibara

**-chan:** This is used to express endearment, mostly toward girls. It is also used for little boys, pets, and even among lovers. It gives a sense of childish cuteness.

**Baka:** This is an informal way to refer to a boy, similar to the English terms "kid" and "squirr."

**Sempai/**

**Sempai:** This title suggests that the addressee is one's senior in a group or organization. It is most often used in a school setting, where underclassmen refer to their upperclassmen as "sempai." It can also be used in the workplace, such as when a newer employee addresses an employee who has seniority in the company.

**Keshi:** This is the opposite of "sempai" and is used toward underclassmen in school or newcomers in the workplace. It connotes that the addressee is of a lower station.

**Sensei:** Literally meaning "one who has come before," this title is used for teachers, doctors, or masters of any profession or art.

**Ona-san/**

**Oni-san:** Normally older siblings are not called by name but rather by the title of older sister (Ona-san) or older brother (Oni-san). Depending on the relationship, -chan or -sama can also be used instead of -san. However, this honorific can also be used with someone unrelated when the relationship resembles that of siblings.

**Obaa-san/**

**Oji-san:** Japanese grandparents are called by their titles rather than by name. Grandmothers are called Obaa-san (or Obaa-sama to imply added respect and distance, or Obaa-chan for more intimacy). Likewise grandfathers are called Ojisan, Ojisama, or Oji-chan.

**-(Mak):** This is usually forgotten in these lists, but it is perhaps the most significant difference between Japanese and English. The lack of honorific means that the speaker has permission to address the person in a very intimate way. Usually, only family, spouses, or very close friends have this kind of permission. Known as *yobaike*, it can be gratifying when someone who has earned the intimacy starts to call one by one's name without an honorific. But when that intimacy hasn't been earned, it can be very insulting.

There are  
many cases in  
the world...

...and  
lose their  
memory...

...and  
lose their  
souls.

People can  
disappear  
like smoke  
in order  
to wander  
through  
the world...



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Picking the Empty Cocoon















Are you coming in or not?

What's wrong?



Here



Sure!

Do you know about the ball cocoons?

It's where two caterpillars have made a big cocoon together, right?



This is another empty cocoon.

There are lots more here than in the mountains near the village.



Yes, I have.

Ever since the old woman before me died.

If I need somebody to talk to, once in a while a mushishi will pass by.



...I never expected two to come at once.



Have you been...

...living here alone all this time?



I thought you might have questions...

...so I've written up a mountain of notes.



Their stories are the only thing I look forward to.

Oh, that's right.



...be sure to capture it.



If you take them apart and form them into two cocoons...



Rya...

...the Uro-san gets confused and comes out.

The "room" gets thinned out, and...



Ah!



That's right.

Try to find empty ones that look like that.

Without those, I can't do my job.



But a bell cocoon is made by two pups with two different threads.

...a cocoon is spun from one thread.

Normally...





They're very scary mushi.

The Uro-san...

...open up holes in the very world we live in.



It's...

Aye...

Never take the Uro-san lightly.



The Uro-san...

...like to make holes in their nests, and the holes widen.



But even so...

...after a few years, the cocoon has to be changed.



If you...

...close the door by mistake, you must not open it!

Should you open...

...and there's an Uro-san in with you.



They find a secret room and come in.

In this area, it's easy for Uro-san to appear.



That's why we always leave the door ajar.



Eventually they go to some secret place...

...or off to some other empty hole.



Grandpa, can we put in the letter next time?

These Uro-san are pretty interesting!



When that happens, the letters don't get delivered properly.







...put the  
sheet on  
the fire.



Where did  
Ito-chan  
go?



Rya...

It isn't  
your  
fault...

I  
didn't...  
...pin  
it well  
enough.



There  
isn't...  
any way!

Rya...



How do  
I get her  
back?



Don't  
open  
up!



Eto-  
chan...



Eto-  
chan...





You have  
to think of  
yourself!



I'd like  
to see for  
myself...

...what a  
Uro Cave  
looks like.



I'll go in  
with you.



...do you  
want to  
try going  
into  
the Uro  
Caves?



...and  
bring  
her  
back.

...to  
find  
Ito-  
chan...

...prom-  
ise...



She  
and I...  
were  
always  
together.



And you  
still don't  
seem to  
be eating  
properly.

But...

...it's been  
five years  
since that  
happened.



...Is some-  
thing that  
never even  
occurred  
to me.

The idea  
that  
Ito-chan  
wouldn't  
be by my  
side...

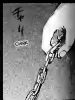


Hold on to this chain and follow me.





This  
chain...  
who laid  
it?



It's an  
ancient  
trail that  
mightn't use  
to get out  
of here.

A muskier  
long ago.



I've heard  
that people  
who are in  
here too long  
lose their  
memories.

I don't  
use it  
very often.



...Is  
an Uro  
Cave...?

This...

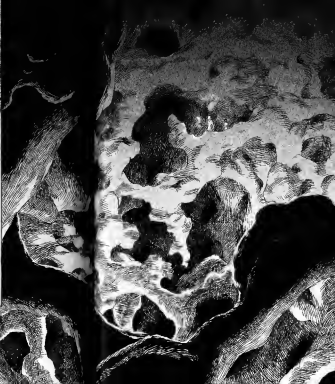


Soon...

...we'll  
come to  
the large  
caverns.



We're only  
at the very  
edge of it.





...in  
uncountable  
numbers.

There are  
great  
caverns  
like this  
one...



...she  
isn't a  
person  
you'll be  
able to  
find.

No  
matter  
how hard  
you may  
try...



...let  
go.

Rys...



The  
prob-  
ability...

...that  
your sister  
is wandering  
around  
somewhere  
in these  
caves is  
very low.



But aside  
from these  
caverns, ev-  
erywhere...

...are  
thousands  
of other  
secret  
rooms...

...that  
will be  
found  
from  
outside.

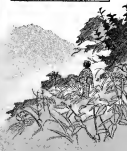


...are the  
rooms  
where this  
chain is  
tied.

They  
say that  
in this  
cave...

...the only  
thing that's  
connected  
to the out-  
side...



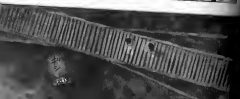




Are you  
all right,  
Hana?"



Shshh.



Some-  
body...

"Later,  
because of  
the letter  
found on her  
breast..."

Somebody  
come here  
quick!!

"...she  
was able  
to return  
home," so  
the story  
goes.

Picking Up: Empty Cocoon  
The End



"She was  
perhaps 10  
years old, and  
she didn't  
speak."

"A human  
child seems  
out of a  
cave."





One-Night Bridge





It's my daughter...  
Hana.



Hi-  
come. Thanks  
for  
coming  
so far.

Please  
come in.



.....  
Please!

Can you  
figure out  
a way to  
help her?!



The  
one  
who...

...put  
Hana into  
that con-  
dition...  
...was  
me.



OK.

It's  
you.



How  
is Hana  
doing?

Huh?  
Were you  
and she  
close?



Could  
you...

...guide  
me to the  
bottom of  
the valley?



We've  
taken  
her to all  
sorts of  
doctors,  
but...

...she has  
no scars from  
hitting her head,  
and we can't  
find any other  
reason for it.



But...



...  
Let's run  
away.



Come  
now!  
Don't  
cry!

Come  
on...



Tell me  
every-  
thing  
that hap-  
pened...

...when  
Hana  
fell.



If they  
really want  
to see you  
happy,  
they'll be  
able to  
bear what  
comes!

So  
would  
you!

My  
parents  
would un-  
derstand!

If we  
did that...  
...the town  
would make  
parishes  
of our families!



...say  
no any  
longer!

The pro-  
test came  
right from  
the main  
house!

But I  
can't...



Let's  
do it,  
Hana!

Let's leave  
the valley...  
Cross the  
mountains...

And find  
some nice,  
bright,  
wide-open  
space to  
live in!



If we stay  
here, we  
won't be  
able to live  
the lives  
we want!



Yeah...

You  
can't refuse,  
so...



I  
know...

...It would  
mean all the  
support for  
this village  
gets cut off!

If you  
refuse...



So I can go...  
...even if it means suppressing what's in my heart...

And I...

...have always loved you!



Hana...

Zen,  
you've always loved me, right?

I think I can bear it.



No, not that!

No!



Hana...



Let's get on the other side of this bridge!

Either way...



That area's gotten a little old and brittle...

Be careful!

Zen...



...there's no way we can live happily!

If we just save ourselves like this...



What's wrong?

I don't think...

...I can go through with it...





Others  
like the one  
that is now  
inhabiting  
Hana.

There  
what  
is?



There's  
nothing  
there...

They're  
usually  
very  
hard to  
see.



?!  
?

Some-  
thing's  
control-  
ling  
Hana...?

They're  
a tendri-  
type muski  
called  
Nekozura.



There  
they  
are.



People have  
seen a bridge  
across the  
valley that's  
lasted for  
only one  
night.



But  
that  
story...

...has  
been  
around  
for ages.



And  
on the  
right...

...that the  
"One-Night  
Bridge"  
spans the  
valley, they  
die.



They  
fall into  
the valley  
and come  
back,  
but...

...their  
hearts  
have  
been  
eaten.



"One-  
Night  
Bridge"?

But...

...it's  
nothing  
more than  
some old  
tale.



What's  
wrong?

Nothing.



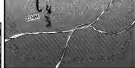
So there  
just isn't  
enough  
light in this  
area.



They're  
gathering  
around the  
last of the  
sunlight.



But when  
I pull from  
the other  
side, they're  
pretty strong.



They're  
pretty  
weak for  
Nisekura.



Those words,  
"valley return-  
ees"...

...and  
"One-  
Night  
Bridge"...

...are  
probably  
more than  
just old  
stories.



WUP?  
Did you  
find  
some-  
thing out?



.....  
I've  
got...

...some-  
thing to say  
that'll be  
hard for you  
to hear.



Is  
this...

...sun-  
shine  
going  
away  
already?











I won't go along with that.



I can't...

...make the man wait any longer than I already have!



...that she can ever be happy the way she is now?

Do you think...

So please...



...to get these mushy things out of her..?

Isn't there a way...



In nine cases out of ten the subject dies at that moment.

Yes, but...



I'll risk it!



Ginko-san...



But despite that, I want her to stay alive.

I can't treat her like some object.



She can't...

...the thought of as being herself anymore.



If Hana can return to normal, she has a good marriage waiting for her!

How do you know?/ You don't know when that bridge appears, or if it appears at all!



You don't have to make such a rash wager.

...then she'll go back to normal the morning after the One-Night Bridge.

If she survived three years ago...



...probably...  
...would have gone  
by now.

If  
Hana...  
...had  
been  
lost...



What's  
that  
sound?



Re...



So just  
take it  
away until  
then.

Now that  
I've got  
this, I can  
strengthen  
the bridge  
by sometime  
tomorrow.



Are you  
leaving?

I  
want to,  
but...

Ah...  
Zen.



Sure.  
Hundreds  
of times.

But  
Hana...  
...lived  
through  
it.



Do  
you live  
here all  
alone?



.....  
Haven't  
you ever  
thought  
of strick-  
ing out on  
your own?



I have  
family in  
the town,  
but...

...I've been  
ostracized.

I've cut  
ties with  
them.













I'm sure  
they'll do  
it before  
midnight.



206



If we let  
this chance  
get by us, I  
don't know  
when we'll be  
able to go  
next.



They're  
... all  
over the  
place.



Even  
right  
into  
the  
dark.

Nisekazura  
have built  
up their  
strength,  
and they're  
swarming.



It'll be  
better  
that way,  
right?

Say,  
Zen...

Why  
don't you  
come with  
me when  
I go.



We should  
be able to  
cross it  
coming  
from this  
side.

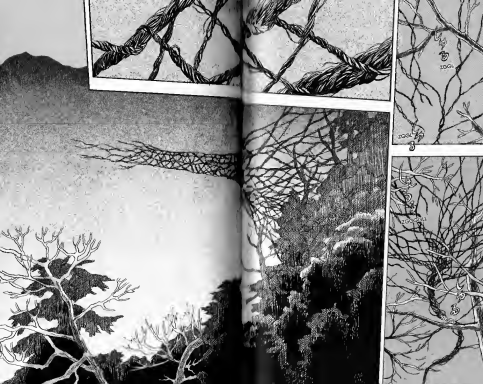


I think  
that...

...the  
"One-Night  
Bridge" is  
going up  
tonight.



But...





Yeah...



Nowhere I  
can forget  
all this.



That's  
right...



Will  
there ever  
be love



I will  
forget



Don't get  
homesick!

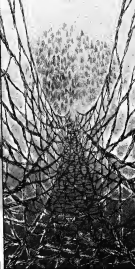


On this  
bridge...

...one step  
backward,  
and you  
fall.



Don't  
worry.  
We'll  
manage.



So you  
came..?



For the last three years...

...I could only stand to be alive because Hana was alive...

No, I'm right!



Hana died three years ago!

You're wrong!



I can't go stepping on that!

I can't go on...!



It was painful for me to see her that way, but...



...It was better than... what it's like now!



I can't go on.

Somewhere in here...

Is someone supposed to be here...



What's wrong?



Don't even try to go back!

What are you doing?!





Should one  
delight in  
the coming  
of spring and  
say there are  
long, cool  
frosts.

During the time  
of year when  
new branches  
into one's hands,  
blossoming plants  
proceed a false  
spring.

Is that  
silly...



Flowers  
are bloom-  
ing..!

Huh..?



And the  
night  
comes  
darkly  
fast.

And  
the  
night  
comes  
darkly  
fast.

the night comes darkly fast.



Spring and Falsehoods



Come, spring?  
Come right  
now!

I don't  
care if  
you are a  
fly!





Did he  
leave...?

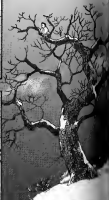


Where can  
you be  
off to so  
early...?

Oh,  
for  
pity's  
sake!



What  
are you  
doing?



The  
snow...

...is  
kind of  
heavy..



Come  
in..

Can I ask  
you to put  
me up for  
the night?



Mr..

Help?

Mikuru?





In  
winter...

...about the  
time that  
food was  
beginning  
to get  
scarce...



...he'd  
suddenly  
disappear  
again.

When  
spring  
came...

...he returned  
unexpectedly.

Mikuru!

But...

He loves  
any living  
creature.

He was  
always the  
type to  
capture them  
and bring  
them home.

Yes...

The boy  
seems  
way over  
on the  
latter  
side.

Of the  
people who  
can see  
them...  
...some  
are fright-  
ened and  
others like  
them.

He'd say  
that he saw odd  
things and was  
obsessed with  
catching them.

And why  
that...

And he  
just  
stayed  
asleep like  
that until  
spring  
came.

Let's  
go back.

We can't  
search  
anyone  
with it  
like this.

And for  
the next  
several  
days, the  
snow really  
came  
down.

That  
winter...

...Mikuru  
went up  
into the  
mount-  
ains...

...he  
began to  
see  
those  
things.

In the  
winter  
three  
years  
back...

I  
thought...

...all my  
hopes  
had been  
doomed.

...and he  
got lost.

And he  
started  
acting very  
strangely...





Hey,  
Miharu!

The  
one up  
there!

That one  
can be  
something  
of a  
problem.



.....



Those that  
have their  
energy  
sucked out  
go back to  
sleep and  
sleep until  
spring.

Um...

These  
"monsters"...  
Are  
they...?



That's  
everything  
that I know.



Calm  
down and  
listen!

I was  
too  
quick  
to offer  
my help.



Don't  
pull  
them  
out!!

Look!  
Look!  
There're bones  
of these in  
places like  
this!



HEY!



Listen,  
you...

Just where  
did you get  
those herbs  
from?



Listen  
when I  
talk to  
you!



Monsters are  
pretty  
harmless  
unless you  
wander into  
them.

As for  
him...



They aren't  
all monsters  
to be feared.



At least I  
can let him  
know about  
those that  
can harm  
him.





















Where  
could  
he  
have...

Damn it...



A sweet  
smell...



That...

...was in  
Mitsuru's  
bag...



If I  
don't  
come  
back...

...try  
searching  
the north-  
ern side of  
the moun-  
tain.



If I go  
there, I  
should  
be able  
to find  
out what  
that is.

There  
must be  
another  
ingredient  
needed  
for him to  
wake up.

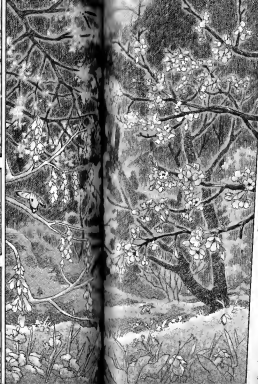


seemed to  
be headed  
in this  
direction.

Last year,  
Mitsuru's  
footsteps...



Ah  
+  
Snap





I can't...  
move my  
fingers...

Suddenly  
my body...  
has gotten  
very cold...

What's  
this?



...are the  
butterflies  
the only  
things  
that...?

Why...



I need  
a clue...  
...but  
where  
could it  
be?



...look  
just like  
regular  
flowers to  
me...

But  
they  
are...



??

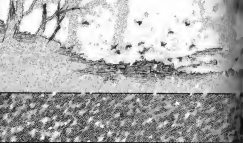


Its tem-  
perature is  
dropping  
pretty  
quickly.

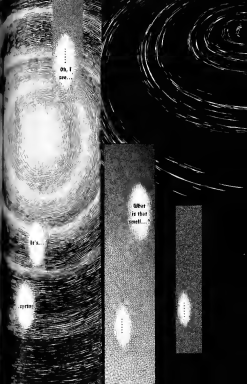


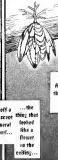
The  
odor...

















In the Cage

It seems strange, but...

I haven't been able to get out in all that time...



You wouldn't mind if I walked with you, would you?

That's perfect!



Yes, I'm headed west.



That's a pretty rotten sense of direction.

Yeah.

I just can't seem to get out of this grove.

Are... you lost?



Three years...?



It's been awful.

Nobody's come by for three years now.



It isn't  
so if you  
can't see  
the sun.



Huh?  
You're a  
local?



I come  
from a  
village at  
the base  
of the  
mountain.



What's  
going  
on?

My  
compass  
isn't  
broken..



Dam-  
nit!

I'm  
back  
again!



I don't  
understand  
it myself



?!



It's a  
big grove,  
isn't it?



We  
started  
out going  
west.

Until we  
wound  
up going  
in a  
circle.

And  
another  
turn,  
and  
more  
turns.

But the  
path took a  
turn.





Her mother's not with us any more, but...

Really...

It's one bright spot in the whole mess.

I'm married to the daughter now. We were childhood friends.

Kisuke?



I'm sorry to have imposed on you.

Ginko-san...



You can come and stay a little while if you like.

It'll be going home now.



This is my wife, Setsu.

I've been talking to a traveler.



What is this?

Maybe you're caught, too.



I became unable to go in the direction I wanted to go.

That's right.



There are more of you?

Hm?



Since it's come to this, you can live here with us.



Yeah.

A mother and child lived here from the start.

Don't even joke about that!









And when he did...



Night after night, he'd wander through the bamboo grove.

The wife was a strange person who could talk to trees and plants.



...he saw his wife in a trance...

...embracing a stalk of white bamboo.



And one day...

...she said that she was with child.



One night he followed his wife.

The husband grew suspicious.



Tell me everything.

...what happened in this grove.



First... I'd like you to tell me...

Eh?



A young couple lived in this bamboo grove.



The gloom finally got to the man, and he abandoned the place.

For many years, they couldn't have a child.



...all grow up hearing this story.

The children of my home town...





But...

...the longer we lived that way...

...the less the people of the village came to visit.



...it was the entire town that raised my sister and me.

After all...



Everybody was like family.

It's a good village.



I'm fine.



Really? I'm glad!



Kisako...

Are you lonely?



...the ones who were able to get back home came up looking for me.

The next day...

But while I was with them, we couldn't leave the grove.



At some point, we'd get separated from one or two of our friends...

Everybody just kept going around in circles.



...and before I realized it, I was the only one left behind.



...so everyone in the town pitched in to bring me food.

I didn't have any family aside from my sister...

After that, I started living in Setsumi's house.



So you knew what would happen when you went with me?

I wondered what would happen with someone I'd never met before.

Sorry.



I admit...  
...I am surprised.

I doubt you believe me, but...



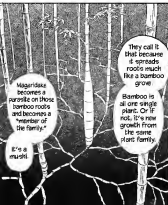
The midwife  
hightailed  
it back to town.

And since  
then, nobody's  
even tried to  
come out here.  
And that's the  
story.



...what is this  
Magaridake  
you talked  
about?

So...



Magaridake  
becomes a  
parasite on those  
bamboo roots  
and becomes a  
"member of the family."

It's a  
mushi.

They call it  
that because  
it spreads  
roots much  
like a bamboo  
grove.

Bamboo is all one  
single plant. Or if  
not, it's new  
growth from  
the same plant  
family.



It has the  
kanji for  
bamboo in  
its name...  
but it isn't  
a plant.



But...



GYA

GYA



Eventu-  
ally...

...Set-  
sou became  
pregnant.



...I  
became  
aware  
of how  
Set-  
sou was born.



That was  
the first  
time...



FTW





Someday  
the three of  
us will live in  
town, and...

...if they actu-  
ally knew  
Setsu, I  
think they'd  
understand.



...might  
not think  
so, but...

The  
people  
of the  
town...



...I'm a little  
anxious  
about my  
daughter.

Yeah...  
Besides...

I don't  
want it to  
be my fault  
that she  
can't find  
happiness.



So you  
are still  
deter-  
mined to  
leave the  
grove?



As the  
grove  
grows, it  
increases  
its own  
roots and  
shoots.

...in return it  
sends back  
to the root  
an ingredient  
that helps the  
bamboo grow  
strong and  
thick.

It sucks  
nutrition  
from the  
bamboo  
roots and  
grows,  
but...



They're a  
hard race  
that is  
extremely  
rare.

We  
Mushishi  
call such  
mites  
"Onko."



Your wife  
is a mix of  
mushi and  
human.



No  
matter  
who her  
parents  
were...

Setsu  
is Setsu.



No...

I've...

...already  
seen what  
my daugh-  
ter looked  
like when  
she was  
born...



Did  
that...  
scare  
you a  
little?

I...  
...have  
an idea.









Of course, so do those who drink it...

...as do those they're constantly with.

All you need do is hold the water...

...and you have to bend to the mushi's will.

Yeah.

...is the entire grove spreading out in a circle from this shoot.

This mushi's body...

Unlike plants, mushi have a will of their own.

It says

"You are a part of me."

The water that Yotsu drinks

...is this.

And the thing that carries the orders...

They can send orders to their parts and carry out that will.

And it tells you to come back.

It's so hot out today.

Forgetting things.

...has no reaction when it's placed near this stalk.

Normal water...









No!  
Stop  
it...!



...













They'd always  
appear just as  
the rainy season  
started.

And before the  
rains finally let  
up, they'd have  
disappeared.



When  
I was a  
child...

I always  
wondered  
about the  
people just  
inside the  
valley fog.





The Sound of Trodden Grass



Really?  
Is it time  
for those  
people  
to come  
again?

We'll have  
to fix the  
storm shut-  
ters before  
the rains,  
won't we?



Oh?



They've  
been  
coming  
here for  
ages.

The worst  
they do is  
goSSIP with  
our men who  
tend the  
mountain.

What?  
They won't  
do any  
damage.



Is it  
all right,  
Father?

Just let-  
ting them  
do whatever  
they want  
on our  
mountain?



Men...

The  
master is  
calling for  
you!



I thought  
you'd be  
here.



I can't see  
anything  
but white  
fog.

You really  
are an odd  
child.



What a  
beautiful  
shade of  
purple  
today.





If you want to enter it, you will not act miserly with what we have!



...don't like the thought of strangers going in and out of there.



But they don't ask anybody for a handout...



I don't really know what they do for a living.



Think of them the same way you think of migrating birds.

Just let them do as they will.



Those people...

They may be taking water from the waterfall pool.



If you listen to the stories of the people in the outlying areas, they're pretty interesting folk.

I guess they're just a mystery.



It wouldn't be as if they are watering their fields with it like the people of the village.

What good will it do to deprive travelers of water?









I've already caught enough for today, so forget it.

I told you to wait!



Just give me a little more time.



Nothing yet?



...to you guys, too...



So it's an important mountain...



Sorry about that.

Well, if it's that way, then okay.

I was going to force you to give me yesterday's fish back.



Who decided on that?

The mountain.



What did you guys mean when you said "master"?



That enormous catfish in the waterfall's pool.



If you gave them to me under false pretenses, then I'll get them back for you.

I don't need anybody's charity.



See you.



Wait!



This land has the source of life running inside it.



Ek...P



Of course I have.

This place does have a light flow, after all.



That's how you can tell.

The ones that become master have grass growing from their bodies from the time they're born.



Ah...



Ah!



So depending on the day, its shape and color can be different.



That stuff gets mixed with the water evaporates, and becomes fog.

The fog here has life.



O-

Okay, then...

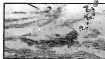


Then I've seen it!

A huge cat/fish with grass coming out of its head.



Really? Wish I was that lucky.





Grandpa checks the fog every day and decides.

So when are you going?

I don't know.



Ah...

That's right. Rainy season will be over soon, huh?



Hm...

How does he decide?

It sounds like you guys are pretty laid back.



Something about how a certain business means that the mountain's calm, and we can go on.

And if it's red, we can't...

If it's gold, that's when the mountain is in its best mood, and we can go in peace.



We went to a place to the south, two mountains over, and saw an odd child.

Aside from that... Oh, yeah!



I can't say for certain.

My uncle exaggerates when he tells stories.



What was he? Some kind of foreigner?

Really?



My uncle said that he didn't seem like one.



That's about where we go. I may meet him.

Two mountains away...

Hm...







I'm not going to apologize.



I mean, I know enough now!

What do you mean, "That's enough"?



Shut up! And don't follow me!

Are you going into a suk again?



I never asked for an apology!



It's not a suk.



Nobody can live just by wandering around.

And we sell them information on how the light flow is changing.

We pass on rumors about possible munshi to munshi!

That's the way we earn our living.



And... I like hearing about villages.



I could have tried to find more stories like those.

You could have told me that right up front.



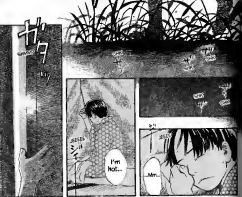
If I don't know, then I can't figure out what's unusual.

I have to know what's normal in town.



Yeah, but...

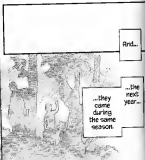
That wouldn't do.





But...

...one  
face...



And...

...they  
came  
during  
the same  
season.

...the  
next  
year...





Pretty soon...



Young master...!

Furi...

What's wrong?

...some munkishi will come along and take him away.



And so...

...he's wiled the mountain to take, but...

...an his guardian, Ma am...



The master is...

The master is...!!



Yeah, we picked him up.

See? The story you told me was true.

He was wandering from town to town without direction.



...wasn't there the year before.



He seems to draw munkishi to him.

If he's in a place with the light flow, he gets in it's way somehow.



He's called Ginko.

He's pretty funny-looking, but he's a good kid.



But...

I don't think he'll be with us for long.



Hmm...



Hey!

Toku!

Toku...



You haven't been to the mountain at all. Are you all right?



I'm sorry to hear about your dad.

I heard about it from your men on the mountain.



They all got permission from my guardian.

Pretty soon they'll dam up the waterfall and the mountain will be ruined.

...wasn't able to protect the mountain.



...don't you wonder if Toku can handle it?

With the village growing, it won't have enough water.

We need to get water to the village and do it right!



See? You should just leave everything to us. That's best!





So... you won't be coming back, anymore?



So you take care too, okay?



I don't know.



Take me with you... please!

I... don't want to be here anymore.

Take me like you took that guy Ginko...



Say...

Do you think that I could join your group?



We're going to move on with it.



The mountain is acting strange...

It's all in an uproar.



I'm sorry.



Take... Listen...

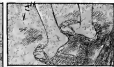
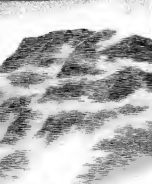


And there are fewer animals.

The light flow has started to move.



The ground is hot, and there's a weird smell.









And half  
a year  
later...



Anybody with  
a place to go  
abandoned  
the village  
and left.

The  
mountain  
blew  
fire.



"You and  
yours..."

"...should  
really get  
away from  
here."



I had one  
more  
thing to  
say...



I had to  
leave yet  
another  
home.



Oh...



...the  
mountain  
fog lost all  
color.

On that  
day...



...would probably know what to do.

Kazuo's people...



The waterfall pool was left behind as a bog.

The mountain was burnt, and the waterfall dried up.



I don't even know how to look for them.



It might have something to do with the old flow.

But...

...I don't know how to help.



Even now, when I hear someone treading in the mountain's grass, I feel relieved.



A dozen or so years later...

It was never as abundant as it was before.

I cleared some of the oak, planted some trees, and brought a little life back to the mountain.



One day, I saw the shadow of a giant catfish.



Among the children born, more than a few were sickly.

But I didn't see the grass on its head like I saw before.



...used to be a part of the light flow, but it left you behind.



...they might have come back.

I think that maybe...





We're pretty close even now.



Yeah...

You and Issza know each other?



He thought the kids might need some medicine about now.

He was the one who told me what's going on here.



He's doing what he always did.



I see...



That's an anti-rash medicine with some added nutrition. They'll need it for a while.

You all were born within the abundance of the light flow and were very healthy, but your kids weren't.



Sorry. When was that?

Huh?



Say, listen...

You may not remember, but you and I have met before.



Do you remember Issza?



Hm...?



.....  
That's good.

Really?



It's best  
that way.



## Bonus Manga

A Story of  
a Long Time  
Ago. Fox  
Spirit Owner  
Chapter.



## Afterword

In the afterword for volume 3, I told that we'd meet again in about a year. Actually volume 4 came out in ten months. (Yeah, there's not much difference, huh?) But when I looked back on my work of ten months ago, there were parts that I was really ashamed of, and fixing them put a strain on me...on my nerves.

<Kicking the Empty Cocoon> There's something special and beautiful in the relationship between silkworms and humans. And something brutal, too. It has a poetic charm. <One-night bridge> Before

I started this, I went on a "material-gathering trip" to Iya in Tokushima Prefecture. I was shocked at the sight of the view bridge and the valley. <Spring and falsehood> I drew the story simply based on the title. I liked how it sounded.

<On the Gage> Bamboo is ranked pretty high in the plant world, and I love it! I love its look. I love its efficiency... <The Sound of Trodden Grass> The model for my image of the Warai is a wandering people in Japan called the Sanka. When I learned of the existence of these Sanka, I was struck by just how abundant Japanese history is. If they thought the life they lived was a good one, then I'm even more impressed.

I kind of figured this would happen, but when I look at my work these volumes 1 and 2, I laugh and say to myself, "I was a really awful artist!"

I need to obtain a bit of spiritual enlightenment fast!  
So until next time, about a year from now...?



Special thanks: Mami-chan, Miyako, Momo, Tsubaki, Tsubaki-chan, Yoko-chan, Yoko  
Thanks for this time, too!



A long time ago they used to point to people with brain damage or nervous disorders and claim that they were "fox-spirit owners" or were being "haunted by fox spirits." Those words were also used to discriminate against people the speaker just didn't like. But when I heard this story, I thought that maybe there were some cases that couldn't be explained away so easily.







### Aya and Ito, pages 8-9

The kanji for Aya's name means cloth, and the kanji for Ito's name refers to thread. These are perfect names for the daughters of silkworm farmers.

### Rest in peace (*jōbutsu*), page 9

According to Japanese and Buddhist tradition, at death a person has the opportunity to move on to the next life. This is called *jōbutsu*. If the spirits have worries still connected to the earth, they are trapped and are unable to move on. Thus Ginko is saying that the old man would be so worried about Aya that he couldn't move on to his afterlife.

### Light flaw, page 34

This is described in previous *Mushishi* stories as areas of abundant *mushi* life as well as abundant plant and animal life. The river of Kōki runs close to the surface in these places.

### Main house, page 54

Traditional Japanese families are arranged in hierarchical order. The main inheritor of a family's name controls the clan, and subordinate siblings, sons, daughters, etc. have to follow the orders of the main house. More details can be found in the notes in volume 1.



## Translation Notes

Japanese is a tricky language for most Westerners, and translation is often more art than science. For your edification and reading pleasure, here are notes on some of the places where we could have gone in a different direction in our translation of the work, or where a Japanese cultural difference is used.

### General notes on *Mushi* and *mushishi*

The kanji for *mushi* is made up of three kanji meaning bug (also called *mushi*) put together. The kanji can be used interchangeably to mean insect, but they can easily take on other meanings. In CLAMP's *xxxHolic*, the kanji was introduced as the name for a type of magical vermin.

*Mushishi* can be translated as "mushi master." Ginko is a man who made a study of *mushi* and seems to have learned to control some through his own senses and others through medicines, remedies, or just a knowledge of their nature. Ginko probably learned his craft from other older *mushishi* who wander Japan.

### Shirakawa-ga, page iv

Listed as a UNESCO world heritage site, Shirakawago is a small village in Gifu Prefecture that has been left in the *gasshō* style of architecture. *Gasshō* refers to hands placed together as if praying, and the architecture features A-frame houses whose roofs look something like joined hands. They are built that way to protect the roofs from the weight of the heavy snow that falls every year in that part of Japan. The area around Shirakawa-gō is mountainous, and it runs the gamut of extreme temperatures, from sweltering summer afternoons to long snowbound winters.

### Uro, page 8

Uro means emptiness or hollowness such as might be found in a hollow tree.

## Oniko, page 160

This name for half-mushi-half-human children is made up of the kanji characters for oni—a Japanese character from fairy tales and legends that looks like an ogre or demon—and a character that looks very much like the one meaning mushi (three characters for bug put together) but with an added element of the kanji for thread. The second character means to be led astray. So the two put together would mean to be led astray by demons.

## Rainy season, page 187

The rainy season in Japan falls in June (about a month earlier in places like Okinawa), when an annual surge of warm air from the South Pacific collides with cold air coming down from the north. This causes several weeks of rain and unstable weather. It is called tsuyu or "plum rains" because it coincides with the blooming of plum trees.

They'd always  
appeared just as  
the rainy season  
started.

And before the  
rains finally let  
up, they'd have  
disappeared.

We're pleased to present you with a preview of volume 5. Please check our website ([www.delreymanga.com](http://www.delreymanga.com)) to see when this volume will be available in English. For now you'll have to make do with Japanese!

## Nisekazura, page 61

In Japanese nise means false or counterfeit. Kazura means vines, so the mushi's name means "false vines."



## Usobuki, page 103

This name is made up of two kanji: uso, which means falsehood, and fuki, meaning to bud or sprout. (The "f" sound, as in fuki, may change to a "b" or "p" sound when within a word.)



## Magaridake, page 151

This name is made up of two Japanese phrases. The first, magari, means to rent a room or to take up lodgings, and the second, take [the "t" sound often changes to a "d" sound within words], means bamboo. So this mushi would mean something like "bamboo that has taken up residence."